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Governor

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William G. Ross Jr.  
Secretary, DENR

# LANDS DAY LURES VOLUNTEERS

The last Saturday in September is National Public Lands Day, a call for volunteers across the nation to learn about and improve public lands.

Nationally, nearly 60,000 volunteers contributed almost \$8 million of improvements to 375 public land sites last year. And, a North Carolina state park gained national recognition for its participation in the event.

Singletary Lake Group Camp was featured in the event's national newsletter. Park Superintendent Angelia Allcox won third prize in the event's volunteer photo contest, and her photograph appeared in the publication. The photo shows local boy scouts and Tom Ellis, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) alumnus and former superintendent of state parks, shoveling sand onto a trail at the park.

"Here's a 90-year-old man alongside these kids, and they're all pulling together, and they're here for the right reason," Allcox said, describing the photograph. "They've got the volunteer spirit and they're here to volunteer for a good cause."

"We wanted to participate



in the event last year because the focus was on the CCC," Allcox said. She added that getting some recognition for the members of the CCC was important to her and the park staff, and it was a way of thanking them for the work they did at Singletary Lake in the 1930s.

"National Public Lands Day, Big Sweep, all these big community events are just that. They

help increase awareness about why we're here and what we do. They help foster a sense of community pride," Allcox said. "These volunteer days are a great way to showcase your parks and show what kind of asset you can be to the community, and encourage people to come back and use the facility. That way they've got a sense of ownership and pride."

Last year, three other North Carolina parks also participated in the event. William B. Umstead State Park held an educational program, and volunteers completed a variety of work —

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## ELK KNOB BILL ENTERED

Legislation has been introduced in the current session of the NC General Assembly to add Elk Knob and Beech Creek Bog in the northwest mountains to the state parks system.

Elk Knob, the second highest peak in Watauga County at 5,520 feet, would be initially purchased by The Nature Conservancy and transferred to the NC Division of Parks and Recreation when full funding is secured. The purchase is expected

to be complete by September.

The Elk Knob property was considered one of the most desirable for preservation from among more than 70 sites in the state examined by a task force of the division over the past two years.

Elk Knob is about 20 minutes northeast of Boone off NC 194.

The tract is approximately 1,000 acres on the northwest

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# ELK KNOB

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slope of the mountain reaching to the summit. The mountain contains the headwaters of the North Fork of New River. Six high-quality natural communities have been identified on the property, as have three species of rare plants: trailing wolfsbane, Canada reed grass and meehania.

The mountain forms the southwestern boundary of Long Hope Valley and is part of a chain of amphibolite rock mountains in Watauga and Ashe counties reaching to Mount Jefferson that

offers nutrient-rich conditions often supporting rare plant species and natural communities.

Several other peaks in the chain have been preserved in recent years including Three Top Mountain, Paddy Mountain and Tater Hill.

In April, the division secured \$1 million toward the total purchase price of \$4 million from the NC Natural Heritage Trust Fund. Additional funding will be sought through the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the

Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

Beech Creek Bog is an environmentally sensitive mountain bog area in Avery County. The 120-acre tract includes the bog's watershed and it would become the first such natural community represented among protected lands in the state.

The bulk of the purchase price came from the Natural Heritage Trust Fund.

## From The Director's Desk

Dear fellow employees:

With all the attention being focused on the drafting of a new budget, it's difficult to remember that the General Assembly has other tasks before it during this year's "short session." Two legislative bills that have been introduced are significant ones for the division and speak to our principal mission of preserving natural resources, a mission that never changes despite periodic budget problems.

Legislation was introduced last month to add Elk Knob and Beech Creek Bog in the northwest mountains to the state park system. Elk Knob includes approximately 1,000 acres and is the second highest peak in Watauga County. It could be either a new state park or a state natural area. Negotiations for Elk Knob are being handled by The Nature Conservancy. Beech Creek Bog is an environmentally sensitive, 120-acre tract in Avery County that offers a natural community not yet represented in our system. The bog and its watershed would become a new state natural area.

The second piece of legislation is the Financing Parks, Recreation and Natural Heritage Bill, which would authorize the use of up to \$10 million a year from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and Natural Heritage Trust Fund to contract for certificates of participation. These certificates, similar to revenue bonds, could raise up to \$100 million to be used for the purposes of the two trust funds over the next few years. While the funds could be used for construction and renovation, the focus of the effort is on land acquisition - just at a time when some corporate interests are releasing environmentally important tracts of land onto the market.

This legislation could give us an outstanding means to further our mission and develop the park system in a thoughtful and systematic way. It's going to take some careful planning to take full advantage of the opportunity, but some important groundwork has already been prepared by our expansion committee. These efforts may represent our best opportunity to continue the growth and improvement of the state park system during the next few years while the operating budget is likely to remain very tight.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer season.

Sincerely,

**Phil**

Philip K. McKnelly

## LANDS DAY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

from trail repair and maintenance to lake cleanup. Goose Creek State Park celebrated the day with an environmental education workshop promoting wetlands.

Hanging Rock State Park held environmental education events and hung a plaque on the dinner bell column in front of the foundation of the Mess Hall. The plaque commemorates the CCC's work at the park. Local boy scouts cleared undergrowth around the original site of the CCC camp in preparation for the ceremony.

This year, state parks are again gearing up for the annual event Sept. 28. To participate in National Public Lands Day, complete a site registration form and mail it to the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, the event's managing agency. Registration forms and additional information about the event are available online at [www.npld.com](http://www.npld.com).

Remember to post your National Public Lands Day event on the division's Internet calendar to increase public awareness of this opportunity to volunteer.

# KOPPLIN SEARCHES FOR MUSSEL BEACH

By TAMARA WARD  
Publications Coordinator

Want to know what's in your water? Ask Sarah Kopplin, the Natural Heritage Program's freshwater ecologist who began work in April.

As freshwater ecologist, Kopplin is responsible for identifying significant aquatic habitats throughout the state and determining conservation priorities based on distributions of rare and endangered aquatic fauna. From mussels and fish to crayfish and a host of macroinvertebrates, if it spends a significant part of its life underwater, Kopplin knows about it — and she's enthusiastic about it.

Take, for instance, her favorite mussel, the dwarf wedgemussel. Kopplin describes looking for the mussel, sticking her hands back in undercut banks, the suspense of not knowing what she's going to touch. "But once you've found the mussel, it's like you've struck gold!" she said.

Kopplin's position involves a number of aspects, from updating the program's biological conservation database with information from recent surveys, to assisting with county inventories, to integrating work completed by other agencies. She said her biggest task will be determining the locations of all rare and endangered aquatic species across the state. Her search has already taken her to Hanging Rock State Park where she examined species in the Dan River.

"We're just lucky that state parks are protected and for the species that exist in them,"



*KOPPLIN'S FIELD RESEARCH WILL TAKE HER INTO SEVERAL STATE PARKS.*

Kopplin said.

Kopplin's work will incorporate state parks as she will inventory their waters and potentially work with surrounding landowners to improve the conservation of the aquatic species. She said she enjoys educating people about rare aquatic species.

"People have a river running through their backyard, and they don't even know they have mussels back there," she said. "It's kind of neat to show them and say, 'Hey, check this out.'"

Kopplin has a long work history in the ecology field. After she earned a bachelor's degree in environmental biology from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, she worked in a number of ecology jobs, including researching Australian ants, studying South American maned wolves at the Smithsonian Institution for Conservation and Research Center in Virginia, and working for The Nature Conservancy as a piping plover steward in the Hamptons, New York.

Her interest in mussels emerged when she worked for the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, researching the distribution of federally endangered mussels after Hurricane Fran. She then attended graduate school, earning a master's in conservation biology and ecosystem management from the University of Michigan. Her thesis focused on freshwater mussel distributions in agricultural watersheds. Upon graduation, Kopplin accepted her current position with the Natural Heritage Program.

Kopplin said she was attracted to the job because she was familiar with many of the aquatic issues in the state, because she would get to explore areas she hadn't seen in North Carolina, and because she grew up in the state.

"I enjoy (my job) because I get to deal with things I love to learn about, and I'm dealing with people who love their jobs," she said. "I never imagined I would be in a job where I could work all the time on such fun things."



# FALCONS RETURN TO HANGING ROCK

*(First of two parts.)*

By TAMARA WARD  
Publications Coordinator

It isn't what most people would consider a cozy home. It's a scraped out section on a rocky ledge bordering a precipice more than 100 feet deep. Vultures and ravens circle above.

If you don't have wings, good luck getting there. You'll have to scale one of the nearly impossible climbing routes with intimidating names such as Vascular Disaster, Reckless Abandon, Deathwish and Nevermore. Yet, if you are one of the 10 nesting pairs of peregrine falcons in North Carolina, hang your coat and prop up your feet; the rock outcrops at Hanging Rock State Park are the perfect place to call home.



This is the third year since the species was extirpated in the state that a pair of peregrine falcons has been summer residents at Moore's Wall in the state park. Last year, the pair had a successful nest with a single fledgling spreading its wings in May.

This year, the pair was not as lucky. They left the nest in early June without any chicks. Still, the fact that the falcons have returned three years in a row to the easternmost peregrine nesting site in the state gives Hanging Rock birdwatchers hope for the future.

"It definitely means that we're successfully doing what the mission of the parks system is," said Tommy Wagoner, superintendent at Hanging Rock. "It's good to know that we're still doing that in combining the people and the natural resource, which is what it is all about."

Wagoner said that he believes the falcons are attracted to the park because of its wilderness setting, its major rock outcrop and the nesting area's inaccessibility to humans. Well, most humans.

Moore's Wall is a favorite among area rock

climbers. Because peregrines are easily spooked when humans get too close, the park works with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission to determine which rock climbing routes are too close to the nest to allow climbing.

This year, 25 of 125 climbing routes in the park were closed while the peregrines nested, keeping the birds a safe distance from climbing enthusiasts. The closed routes offer some of the park's most difficult climbs, which are attempted by experienced climbers. Most climbers use the easier routes on another face of the rock outcrop.

Wagoner said that although rock climbers are concerned any time areas are closed, climbers at Hanging Rock understand why the routes are temporarily shut down. To advertise which routes are closed, Wagoner notifies climbing organizations, some of which post the closures on their websites. The closures are also posted on the park's website

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## ABOUT PEREGRINES...

Peregrine falcons have white faces with a black wedge extending below their eyes. Their blue-gray wings typically span about 40 inches, and they have black bars or spots beneath their wings and bodies. They can fly at speeds in excess of 200 mph, according to a 1999 study by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Historically, peregrines were common from New England through Georgia. Due to the harmful effects of DDT, which interfered with eggshell formation, the falcon populations began declining in the late 1940s.

By the 1960s, the peregrine falcon was extirpated in the eastern United States. Populations in the West declined by 80-90 percent, leaving only 324 nesting pairs in the nation. Due to the ban on DDT and cross-breeding, the falcons have recovered to more than 1,500 breeding pairs in the nation and Canada. In 1994, the species was removed from the national threatened and endangered species list.

Peregrine falcons have been spotted at Pilot Mountain and Hanging Rock state parks throughout the last decade. Hanging Rock is the first and only state park to have a successful peregrine falcon nest and is the easternmost peregrine falcon nesting site in the state.

# TRAIL MAINTENANCE CLASS LAUNCHED

By CHARLIE PEEK  
Public Information Officer

There is the rolling grade dip, the climbing turn and of course, the nick.

These are not slick moves on a skateboard, but technical solutions to trail maintenance problems. Rangers and division maintenance staffers are adding the terms to their vocabularies thanks to a new trail maintenance class designed by David Downer, the central district trails specialist.

The first class was held at Eno River State Park in May and taken to William B. Umstead State Park in June. Downer said a goal is to reach as many parks as possible with the one-day training while refining it along the way.

"This is as much art as science," Downer told the class at Umstead during a two-hour classroom session. "It comes with experience and training. And, it helps to have a number of eyes looking at a trail problem."

## FALCONS

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and on the climbing permits visitors obtain before beginning their climb.

The park is considering installing a temporary display about peregrines in the visitor's center lobby. And this year, the park will offer educational programming about the peregrines. Toby Gordon, who has voluntarily monitored the peregrines since they first arrived at the park, will lead a public program about the birds later this summer.

*(Next month: Tracking an elusive bird.)*



*TRAILS SPECIALIST DAVID DOWNER, CENTER, HELPS UMSTEAD STAFF INSTALL A WATER BAR ON THE POTT'S BRANCH TRAIL. BELOW, INTERN AMY DAVIS PRACTICES WITH A CLINOMETER.*



After some training with a "smart level" and clinometer, tools invaluable for measuring degree of slope and percentage of grade, the students offered their eyes and opinions by walking a portion of the well-worn Pott's Branch Trail, to spot problem areas and suggest solutions.

They returned after lunch to implement the solutions with shovels, pickaxes, fire rakes, a wheelbarrow and sweat.

Downer pointed out that partly due to budget constraints, staff at most parks are currently more concerned with trail maintenance than new trail construction. There has been a

need to define some standard techniques for eroded, overused and sometimes dangerous trail sections, he said.

Downer said that he adapted and condensed two-day training offered in March at Dupont State Forest that was offered by a friends group there and a mountain bike organization. Downer is building a library of books and videotapes about trail construction that is available to division staff, and he said that training in routing and design would be the next logical step.

The maintenance class delved into trail aesthetics as well as the nuts and bolts of managing stormwater, dealing with hazards and maintaining grade and slope within the comfort level of casual hikers. The class also dealt with so-called "social trails," those bushwhacked bald spots that appear around popular natural features.

One of the ultimate goals, he said, is to create a sustainable trail system that requires low maintenance and results in minimal impact on the landscape.



# KERR LAKE STAFF TACKLES TOUGH JOB

The shower fixtures were rusted and not functioning properly. Tiles on the floor were missing, creating an injury hazard. Handicapped benches were not usable due to wear and tear on a bathhouse built in 1986 that served park visitors 24-hours per day, year round.

Clearly, the bathhouse at Nutbush in Kerr Lake State Recreation Area was in need of a major, labor-intensive makeover.

But, instead of spending an estimated \$50,000 to hire an outside crew to do the work, Kerr Lake saw its maintenance crew step up to renovate the bathhouse at a total cost of \$18,000 in supplies — saving the state more than \$30,000.

“It’s a good morale builder to do a project and finish it,” said Brad Weatherington, Facility Maintenance Supervisor II. “It gives you something you can see and be proud of.”

The crew removed old tiles from the floor and chiseled the concrete until it was level. They replaced the tiles, shower stalls, bathroom stalls and fixtures, mirrors and lights. They then installed soap dispensers and paper towel hangers. They rewired electrical receptacles, resurfaced vanities and benches, and they painted both the interior and exterior of the building.

The entire renovation took about six weeks. And although finishing touches are still being made to the building, the bathhouse reopened in time for the spring camping season. Already, campers have been applauding the improvements.

Park staff who worked on the project include: Alfred Edwards, Maintenance Mechanic IV; John Schuster, Maintenance Mechanic IV; Chris Curl, Maintenance Mechanic III; John Abbott, Maintenance Mechanic II; Christine



*STAFF MAKEOVER SAVED STATE AT LEAST \$30,000.*

Hargrove, Maintenance Mechanic II; Herman Jordan, Maintenance Mechanic II; Denise Finkelstein, Maintenance Mechanic II; Philip Hicks, Maintenance Mechanic II; Charles Forsythe, Mechanic II; Joel Valentine, General Utility Worker; and Vince Parks, General Utility Worker. Seasonal park employees who also assisted in the project were Larry Edwards, Sandra Lawrence, Robert Hicks and Willie Wright.

## GEOLOGISTS SHARE KNOWLEDGE OF FALLS LAKE

By RANGER STACY HINES  
Falls Lake State Recreation Area

Tyler Clark and an assistant from the North Carolina Geological Survey visited Falls Lake State Recreation Area in mid-April to enlighten the ranger staff about some of the history and geology surrounding Falls Lake.

The pair had been surveying the Falls Lake area for several months in all sorts of weather, including a winter snowstorm, in order to map the

mineral and rock formations found throughout the Falls Lake Project.

The geologists explained some of the basic geological concepts in a classroom setting and then applied what the ranger staff had learned in the classroom by conducting a boat tour of the interesting geological spots around the lake’s shoreline.

The geologists are still surveying and investigating some areas and hope, in the near future, to publish what they have discovered.

# NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT MAY 2002

PARK	MAY 2002	TOTAL YTD MAY 2002	MAY 2001	TOTAL YTD MAY 2001	% CHANGE (2001/2002)	
					MAY	YTD
BOONES CAVE		9,224	3,233	12,992	-100%	-29%
CAROLINA BEACH	26,953	82,989	28,440	86,422	-5%	-4%
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE	15,700	43,518	15,023	41,678	5%	4%
CROWDER'S MOUNTAIN	31,806	127,964	25,044	108,948	27%	17%
ENO RIVER	30,387	126,281	30,856	126,171	-2%	0%
OCCONEECHEE MOUNTAIN	3,581	14,249	3,468	15,470	3%	-8%
FALLS LAKE	210,004	372,131	239,540	413,984	-12%	-10%
FORT FISHER	123,197	420,100	82,350	220,412	50%	91%
FORT MACON	141,330	454,066	141,898	434,386	0%	5%
GOOSE CREEK	14,166	60,979	12,419	47,125	14%	29%
GORGES	13,682	42,664	7,341	28,237	86%	51%
HAMMOCKS BEACH	24,990	66,972	21,734	59,128	15%	13%
HANGING ROCK	40,707	125,088	38,997	125,275	4%	0%
JOCKEY'S RIDGE	105,350	288,262	110,144	278,962	-4%	3%
JONES LAKE	12,260	33,416	14,540	42,504	-16%	-21%
JORDAN LAKE	283,421	600,473	116,072	412,652	144%	46%
KERR LAKE	256,496	625,008	195,940	454,668	31%	37%
LAKE JAMES	49,125	104,030	40,664	92,606	21%	12%
LAKE NORMAN	42,231	137,477	20,934	67,590	102%	103%
LAKE WACCAMAW	12,372	42,604	11,240	38,616	10%	10%
LUMBER RIVER	5,515	18,898	5,912	22,027	-7%	-14%
MEDOC MOUNTAIN	7,723	20,435	7,326	23,486	5%	-13%
MERCHANT'S MILLPOND	11,389	41,006	9,759	38,175	17%	7%
MORROW MOUNTAIN	62,480	181,100	53,900	174,060	16%	4%
MOUNT JEFFERSON	9,888	30,730	8,385	28,373	18%	8%
MOUNT MITCHELL	51,922	112,051	60,533	108,924	-14%	3%
NEW RIVER	22,085	49,565	12,285	33,109	80%	50%
PETTIGREW	11,858	30,183	11,777	38,336	1%	-21%
PILOT MOUNTAIN	39,276	140,168	37,669	140,008	4%	0%
RAVEN ROCK	11,555	48,963	12,865	50,286	-10%	-3%
SINGLETERY LAKE	1,204	4,841	1,488	4,736	-19%	2%
SOUTH MOUNTAINS	18,720	64,398	19,652	77,320	-5%	-17%
STONE MOUNTAIN	42,824	159,052	41,180	193,152	4%	-18%
WEYMOUTH WOODS	2,959	12,831	2,729	10,981	8%	17%
WILLIAM B. UMSTEAD	40,237	167,964	41,343	145,665	-3%	15%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	1,775,370	4,857,657	1,486,680	4,196,464	19%	16%

# WEYMOUTH HOLDS 2ND OPEN HOUSE

On May 5, more than 50 park visitors including many park neighbors gathered at Weymouth Woods State Natural Area for the preserve's second annual open house. This event is sponsored by Friends of Weymouth Woods and the Weymouth Park Advisory Committee.

The open house gives folks from the community a chance to meet our friends group and committee members and learn what they do and what is happening at the preserve.

After a short welcome and introduction of staff, visitors were invited to participate in several programs. These included a talk on red-cockaded woodpecker management efforts at Weymouth, a museum tour, a hummingbird banding demonstration and a slide presentation on the naval stores industry.

Highlights from these programs included the capture and banding of two ruby throated hummingbirds by peakload naturalist Susan Campbell. Janet Daughtry, wife of South District Superintendent Scott Daughtry,



*VISITORS USE 'PEEPER' TO LOOK INTO NEST CAVITY OF WOODPECKER.*

had the privilege of holding one of the birds to release it.

As part of the red-cockaded woodpecker talk, participants were able to look inside a woodpecker cavity hole via a high-tech camera called a "peeper." This small camera is cranked upwards on a telescoping pole into the cavity. The camera transmits the image to a small

LCD viewer attached to the pole. While the cavity we "peeped" was empty, visitors got to see red-cockaded woodpeckers during the talk as they foraged around the colony site.

Thanks to the efforts of our advisory committee and friends group, this year we had a donation box in place for the open house. The advisory committee worked with park staff in recruiting members and assisting in the Friends of Weymouth Woods becoming a committee of the Sandhills Area Land Trust, allowing it to operate under its 501 (c) status. Following this step, they developed a memorandum of agreement with the state that allows Weymouth to have a donation box and provides a better means for handling donations.

In the past, funds for the friends organization came primarily from an annual horse trial event. Among many projects, these funds have been used to maintain equestrian trails and to purchase computer equipment, a digital camera and materials to build accessible ramps.

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## Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:



to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

*and*

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

*The Steward*

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